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LYRA MANCUNIENSIS

WALTER HUGHES

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LYRA MANCUNIENSIS

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LYRA MANCUNIENSIS

BY

WALTER HUGHES

LONDON

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER & CO., LTD.

1890

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THESE VERSES
ARE DEDICATED
TO
THOSE WHO READ THEM.

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SONNET I.

ORION is striding yonder through the sky
Looking to earth, and wondering much to see
A mortal who can love so well as I,
But ceasing wonder when he looks on thee.
Why do the stars, each steadfast in his place,
Fixed through a thousand years, all seem to gaze
And tremble when they see thee? Can thy face
Strike e'en the heavenly dwellers with amaze?
Yet day will come, the earth with ceaseless swing
Shall carry thee where they shall see no more,
The sun shall smile with joy, and everything
Shall vow there ne'er was beauty seen before.
But I alone can never gaze my fill :
By night, by day, oh let me see thee still !

SONNET II.

WHY should I grieve, because perchance thy smile
Hath shone upon another ; or thine ear,
Prone once to list my speech, hath found more cheer
In better words than mine ? And yet the while
A sigh will rise to think I am forgot,—
If not forgot, remembered but to touch
The mind but not the heart, if e'en so much.
Whether, alas ! thou lovest him or not
Thou lov'st not me. The stars that saw my birth
Have known that Love and I should never meet
Save to gaze lonely o'er a lonely earth,
And seek in vain some well-belovèd form
That might (oh had it been !) have led my feet
In peace and safety through the o'erwhelming storm.

SONNET III.

LIKE as in early Winter's evening sky
The waxing moon shines pale, and overhead
The speechless stars a twinkling brightness shed,
And change no whit the while all else must die ;
Like as a barren earth doth but recall
The spring-tide's bloom, that now is seen no more,
The birds, the flowers that blew so sweet before,
And frosty Death kills Summer's all-in-all :
Lo ! thus I mourn that once was glad no less ;
My hopes are dead, and rise no more anew ;
A bloodless grief hath banished happiness,
And, though undying Truth shine o'er my head,
Weak is the light that guides me, and untrue,
And the warm cheery sunshine-smiles are fled.

SONNET IV.

DEPARTED are the guests, the hall forsaken,
Where round the board e'en now a festive throng
But dimly heard the conscious rafters shaken
With overcharged luxuriance of song.
Lonely I walk, and half in sadness ponder
On what has been—to be, alas ! no more,—
On hopes where Fancy dreamily may wander,
But unfulfilled till youth and life are o'er.
All these are gone, but I alone remaining
Am left to sing, one voice too feebly shrill,
Last of a choir, and all unused to fill
The echoing vaults with floods of joyous sound.
I too must cease, my purposeless complaining
Is ended, and the clock has run his round.

SONNET V.

IF my regrets were but a meed of praise,
And all my sins were deeds of high design,—
If all my years were filled with happy days,
And all my words were gems of Wisdom's mine,—
If all my foes were friends who loved me well,
And all my thoughts were noble and sublime,—
If I had wrought what passes speech to tell,
And earned a fame that should outweary time,—
Had I a heart that could but love, not hate,—
Had I a brain whose thought was ever right,—
Had I an arm to mould a nation's fate,—
Had I the faith to ever seek the light,—
Did every failure lead me to success,—
Then were I more than man, or haply less.

SONNET VI.

WHY should I strive? why should my young life fade,
Worn out by toil? My hopes are highly set ;
Yet not for gold, or wealth in storehouse laid,
Is my deep longing. Like to waves that fret
The heartless rocks away, and work the plan
Formed in an older world, intent I seek
To pierce the husk of things and be a man,
Not live resigned—the refuge of the weak.
The bubble fame may break—I care no whit,
'Twas not for me : deep pondering on the age
May make men wretched—I will none of it.
I find not there the battles I would wage.
What would I then? Alas, no guide have I !
Yet will I rise, or struggling upward die.

SONNET VII.

LOAD, Time, thy quickening step, nor headlong fly
In haste to lift the coming Summer's curtain.
I fain would stay, and lie a moment by,
Nor stake this happy hour for one uncertain.
Less faith have I, than in youth's giddy heat,
In what a day unlived may hold in store ;
But larger joy to walk with lingering feet
Through life's brief scenes, now lovelier than before.
Thus let me live, nor sunk in niddering ease
Nor seeking still the eyes of men to fetter.
Oh ! let this day be long, that I may seize
And hold it fast ; I ne'er shall know a better.
Rather would I thus live, and nothing lack,
Than forward strive, or look with longing back.

SONNET VIII.

IF ever I have listened to the wave
That makes Iona musical, or stepped
Among Avignon's olive groves, or wept
A poet's tear by Heloisa's grave,
Or lived with former ages in the sun
That gilds the land of Dante, then it seems
Like half-imagined images or dreams,
That wake and wane when night is nearly done.
Beauty and thoughts of beauty droop and die,
Crushed in the whirl of waking life ; and now,
If that I dreamed such dreams, I know not how
They come no more, or fade in passing by.
A mind transformed has no more power to tell
Of things it loved before, and loved so well.

SONNET IX.

THROUGH life's rough path, where foes unsparing hide,
Some don Faith's armour, and, in strong array
Marching together, thousands side by side,
Fighting all ill, come safely on their way.
Others of stronger mould, with barèd breast
And Berserk rage all lurking monsters kill,
Or through untrodden forests, without rest,
Break a clear path that all may come who will.
But there be some who, weaker for the fight,
Yet daring all, take courage at the view
Of danger ; they may still defend the right,
And find a brave and worthy work to do,—
Like as of old the shepherd, Jesse's son,
Fearless o'ercame the giant with a stone.

SONNET X.

WE cannot know the future ; we can only
Face it with courage, be it good or ill :
As Bruce in exile, shelterless and lonely,
O'ercame despair, and hoped to conquer still ;
As he of Venice, who across the waste
Brought word of Samarkand and far Cathay,
Pierced to the dark Unknown, as if in haste
To join the Eastern dawn and Western day.
Danger will come, and sorrow : we must wait,—
Danger at closer sight may lose its fear,
And sorrow hold some balm ; the immortal's hate
Brought wise Odysseus to his kindred dear ;
And Lazarus, who begged the rich man's grace,
In Abraham's bosom found a resting-place.

SONNET XI.

TALK not of weariness ; too calm and sure
Thy soul, I know, for such to enter there,
Though he whose youthful voice rang sweet and pure
Tunes in his later notes a harsh despair.
Great is his shame who should have had much praise,
But thou shalt gain a triumph, nothing less,
O'er age, that dulls the strength of younger days ;
O'er pain, that makes of life a wilderness ;
O'er death, dark curtain of a light unseen ;
And o'er despair, that seems too bitter now,—
For not for naught have those before us been,
Nor those around, and not for naught art thou.
Look onward yet ; though dark the moment be,
Doubt not, but know the world hath need of thee.

MADRIGAL I.

THE soft green hills slept in their leafy cloak,
The rugged peaks frowned gloomily on high,
As one by one the little birds awoke,
Singing a roundelay of untaught grace,
While grey as pearl was summer's morning sky,
And pearly grey the restful ocean's face.
How sweet it was to me to walk awhile,
With thee to watch the loitering sun arise,
O happy Phyllis with the sunny smile,
O happy Phyllis with the laughing eyes !

MADRIGAL II.

THE sun may loiter, but that would not I ;
The birds may sing, thy voice is sweeter far ;
The granite peaks may frown, they know not why ;
The birch tree tremble on the breathless hill ;
On thee I gaze, and pray that Time may mar
No hour of thine, but leave thee happy still.
With thee I'd walk o'er each unconscious mile,
And taste the day unheeding how it flies,
O happy Phyllis with the sunny smile,
O happy Phyllis with the laughing eyes !

MADRIGAL III.

WOULD that I were where tower the rocks gigantic,
Where the West wind blows gently from the sea
That flows by Morven from the vast Atlantic,
Would that my foot were planted on the heather
On Nevis' side,—yet sweeter far to me
To be with Phyllis—she and I together.
Alone with her am I, though in a crowd ;
With her a wilderness doth lack no grace ;
Her voice I hear, though tempests roar aloud,
Nor would I list another in its place.

MADRIGAL IV.

YET am I sad for Phyllis will not hear me,
And doth with others speak, uncaring aught ;
Happy alike when far away or near me ;
Living from hour to hour, and never haunted
By the perpetual presence of one thought
As I by hers—thus ever am I daunted.
So must I guess and wonder at my fate,
Till jealousy doth gnaw me, and I glance
With knitted brows, wishing that love or hate
Were mine. Yet neither is—or both perchance.

I DREAM OF PHYLLIS.

I DREAM of Phyllis. Does she dream of me?
My heart says yes, but fears it speaks too gladly.
How can I riddle what her dreams may be?
Perchance she laughs, perchance she weepeth sadly,
Perchance her fancy hath forgot me quite,
Yet I, poor fool, still dote upon her madly.
Oh that some fairy imp or lover's sprite
Would lightly fly to her beset with sleep,
And tell me if I read her mind aright,
And bring my image there that she may see
How hers is housèd in my bosom deep!
I dream of Phyllis. Does she dream of me?

O PHYLLIS, SAY!

O PHYLLIS, say, to what shall I compare thee?
Only thyself can with thyself compare!
Vainly the stars, the birds, and flowers beware thee,
For they are nothing worth when thou art there.
Alone the fairest among earthly things,
Yet not alone, I watch thee everywhere;
And, watching thee, my fancy would have wings,
But cannot fly, since naught may rise above thee,—
Therefore it stays, with bootless questionings,
Why thou art fair and why all creatures love thee.
Then needless were my praises to declare thee
The sweetest maid, when earth and sky approve thee.
O Phillis, say, to what shall I compare thee?

I SANG OF PHYLLIS.

I SANG of Phyllis, and I sing again,
For singing her my heart was beating truly.
Then vowed I to forget her, but in vain—
That vow was broken straight, though made but newly.
I sang of field and forest, sword and strife,
I sang of others' charms, and praised them duly ;
I strove to stir my soundless harp to life
By glowing words wherein my heart was not,
For joy was seldom and regrets were rife
In struggles, strong and feeble, cold and hot.
And memory would not vanish, but was fain
To dwell on her who cannot be forgot ;
I sang of Phillis, and I sing again !

TO YOU WHO KNOW.

To you who know the tenour of my song
I must not sing, but seek some other hearer ;
Those ancient fancies I have held so long
May weary, though to me they are the dearer.
So if I write of Freedom, War, and Love,
To you the uttered feeling comes no nearer.
Perchance there may be others they can move
To thoughts not known before, and haply bring
Some grovelling spirit to the light above.
For well I know that oft a trivial thing
Hath had great consequence and issue strong.
To others then I turn, no more to sing
To you who know the tenour of my song.

VILLANELLE.

THE southern breezes, as they pass,
Breathe not their way with touch as light
As Phyllis stepping o'er the grass.

Like gentle Nature's looking-glass,

She seems to dalliance to invite

The southern breezes as they pass.

What flower, what sunshine can surpass,

To me, the rare but welcome sight

Of Phyllis stepping o'er the grass?

Not loudly, like the sounding brass,

But gently, whisper with delight

The southern breezes as they pass.

What songs might troubadours amass,

Should I the sweet impression write

Of Phyllis stepping o'er the grass!

She is my own, my darling lass,

And I can watch in charms unite

The southern breezes as they pass,

And Phyllis stepping o'er the grass.

ON THE GRASS.

ON the grass round dewdrops shine,
Changeful Nature's diamond mine,
Till the frost in sportive glee
Turns them all to filigree.

Streams, that wind in current slow,
Brighter green than emeralds show ;
And the blaze of rubies rare
Pales before the sunset's glare.

Pearls may fade, their beauty shorn
By the mists that float, at morn,
O'er rocks that in a setting stand
Of golden broom and silver sand.

But I seek the dearest prize
In the depths of Phyllis' eyes :
These a thousand treasures hold,
More than silver, more than gold !

OH, LONG THE WAY!

OH, long the way before me,
As I hasten through the gloaming !
But a magic spell is o'er me ;
I am coming, I am coming !
Oh ! may the sunlight tarry,
Oh ! may the dull clouds slacken,
Lest the night its mantle carry
O'er the golden-tinted bracken !
May no fairy voices hush me
To slumber as I travel,
May no falling oak-tree crush me,
Or wandering pathways ravel,
Ere I come to thee, my sweetest,
The goal of all my roaming !
Oh, such an end is meetest,—
I am coming, I am coming !

THE PRISONER.

THROUGH the bars of my prison
I see the green meadow,
Ere the sun is arisen
And the land is in shadow.
The stars are alight
With a whiteness new born,
Ne'er seen but when night
Is just yielding to morn.
The light seems to linger
Like a care-little maiden,
Ere it rouses each singer
From the branches, song laden.
Oh ! long may it linger,
Oh ! long may they slumber,
Ere the sun, the woe-bringer,
Fill up my days' number !
From the floor of my cell
I still gaze at the sky,
At the world. Fare ye well,
For at morn I must die !

THE BEGGAR.

FOUND dead—all frozen to death in the night ;
Only a beggar—a luckless wight.
Poor fellow, the thought of it grieves me sore !
I'll try to forget it—no more, no more !
Yet hold, let me laugh as hard as I can,
He was worthy as I am—a man is a man.
Only a beggar ! ay, only !—that only
Cuts off the dead one, nameless and lonely,
Off from his fellows, off from mankind,
The race of wealth, and the strife of mind.
Who was he ? Nobody. Why should we grieve ?
If 'tis well he has lived, 'tis well he should leave.
The world is bitter, the world is hard ;
We've our livings to earn, and our havings to guard.
An idler, who eats that others may toil,
A blight on the land, a curse on the soil !
A blight and a curse ! What, then, am I ?
The time will come for us all to die,

And that beggar and I stand side by side,
Each on his own poor worth to be tried.
'Tis well for me now in my strength to speak,
And look down upon him, worn, weary, and weak,
Dying and dead. Ah ! fie on such pride !
They don't reckon so on the other side.
No ! I'll be kind, and speak him fair,
Lest I should some day meet him there !

PHYLLIS.

PHYLLIS, with a gleeful eye,
Sees me not, but passes by ;
Turning down the lane that only
Leads to pastures flat and lonely,
Where away doth Phyllis go ?

I know, I know.

Who is waiting in the meadow,
Under eve's protecting shadow ;
Why doth he with constant gaze,
Watch the parting of the ways ;
Waiting, though the hours be slow ?

I know, I know.

Will she greet him kindly, gently ?
Will he answer eloquently ?
Will they feign a sweet surprise,
Close together lips and eyes ?
What may mean that whisper low ?

I know, I know.

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Why is Phyllis sad of face

When the winter comes apace?

Why do years and hearts grow older?

Why is youth and sunshine colder?

Why is Phyllis full of woe?

I know, I know.

Why should Phyllis pine away?

Why doth midnight follow day?

Sad the tale begun so gaily ;

Sad that it should happen daily !

It hath been, and will be so.

I know, I know.

A SONG.

A SONG of the sun and the south,
A song of the olive and vine;
The Nile's wide flow, and the Tagus' mouth,
The Basque and the Apennine.

The Ægean, Messina, and Tyre,
The Rialto, the Arno, and Rome;
Their echoes in song never tire,
Though we hear them far distant at home.

MAID OF SKYE.

BONNY little maid of Skye,
Tresses wild, and wilder eye ;
Never timid, never shy ;
 Barefoot through the heather leaping,
 Swiftly over boulders creeping,
 In the burn at fishes peeping,
Nimble as the flying doe,
Hardy as the kine that low
In the misty vale below :
 Dost thou ever pause to ponder ?
 Dost thou ever fear to wander
 On the dreary moorland yonder ?
Bonny maiden, tell me why
Thou art happier than I ?
Tell me, little maid of Skye !

WE PARTED IN SPRING.

We parted in Spring time, we parted in tears,
Like an April morn when the sun is pale ;
We met at the Harvest-tide, after long years,
With smile and content at our life's half tale.

But the Spring had a hope, and our spirits were young,
And the Autumn sun daily was sinking more low ;
Youth's sorrows are hopeful, though grief may be strong,
And the joys of our manhood are tempered with woe.

PRETTY MAID.

Pretty maid, pretty maid, why are you smiling?

Mischief is lurking behind those blue eyes.

Know you not, flattery turns to reviling,

Bitterness lurks in a smile ere it dies?

Pretty maid, pretty maid, be not so cruel,

Try not your lover beyond his poor strength;

To your own sacrifice bring not the fuel,

Lest he should rally, and leave you at length.

Pretty maid, pretty maid, when he has left you,

Then you will wonder you could not be kind,—

Mourn for the triumph of which he bereft you,

Leaving regret and reflection behind.

FAME.

FAME is a bubble, glory is a sham,
And popularity's a fond delusion ;
Not what men think of me, but what I am,
Is worth a thought, the rest is but confusion.

Whate'er a man does well oft meets derision ;
His poorest work a rich applause inherits :
Whate'er he does, he finds the world's decision
Either below or else above his merits.

THOUGHT AND ACTION.

ACTION without thought is a stormy sea ;
Thought without action is a wilderness :
The desert sand brings forth no flower or tree ;
The tempest brings but danger and distress.
But thought and action, moving hand in hand,
Is the sweet interchange of sea and land.

COME, PHYLLIS.

COME, Phyllis, leave your spinning ;
The fair is just beginning,
And every lad must seek his lass
If she be worth the winning.

You think it very clever
To turn me off with " Never,"
But I tell you I shall win you yet,
If I have to wait for ever.

I shall not sulk or worry,
Or put you in a flurry,
But if you're cold I'll take my time
And not be in a hurry.

I know you mean to take me,
So naught you say can shake me ;
I'll not be sad and woebegone,
Howe'er you try to make me.

I'll never be so foolish
As to weep if you are coolish,
But keep a constant heart for you
Although you call it mulish.

Come out, and be in reason ;
Cold looks are out of season :
For an eye of frost, when the spring is come,
Is little short of treason.

I'm keen, and yet no wizard ;
I'm true, and wear no vizard ;
And you are just the bonniest lass
From Orkney to the Lizard.

THERE IS MUSIC.

THERE is music in earth and in air,
And Spring is her blessing bestowing ;
And sorrow and care
Have no right to be there
When Nature her beauty is showing.
I'm going
To where I can hear the grass growing !

So, Phyllis, come out ! Have a care,
Come quick, lest I venture to doubt you.
If you are not soon there
I'll be off, and I swear
I'll take with me some other to flout you.
Without you
I soon shall forget all about you !

PARTING WITH PHYLLIS.

PHYLLIS, Phyllis, we must part ;
For a while you will not see me :
Yet I shall not break my heart ;
Parting will from sorrow free me.

When before your eyes I go
I must do my best to please you,
But the more my feelings glow,
Something seems the more to freeze you.

When I wander far away
I can keep all sorrow under.
Let us cease this folly, pray,—
We are better far asunder !

PHYLLIS, TIME WAS.

AH, Phyllis ! time was when I thought you
The one to whom others should bow ;
With longing and tremor I sought you,
And I don't think you otherwise now.
For how
Can I hide what my feelings allow ?

In the course of this life of insanity
I've been courted, at least by a few,
Just sufficient to flatter my vanity,
But it palled when it ceased to be new.
It's true
I never was courted by you !

I don't rant as much as I did ;
I may be a little bit colder ;—

"The feelings can better be hid
When a man is a few summers older,
And bolder,
And has learned to endure the cold shoulder.

I can meet you and not be excited ;
I can smile though your glances may slay :
Don't think that my life has been blighted,
Though I love you sincerely to-day.
But stay,
You'll be bored if I talk in this way.

WE MUST PART.

We must part, then, for ever,—they say 'tis the best,—
And be parted while time shall be :
Thou to the East, and I to the West,
Across the unending sea.

I to the sunset, thou to the dawn,
To the region of hopeful day ;
Each on the wings of the sea-wind borne,
But each on a different way.

Yet it may be, the farther our wandering feet
The deserts and oceans divide,
The nearer we come to the day we shall meet
Around on the other side.

HOW LONG !

How long the night, and dreary ! how weary
I sigh alone !

Alone I sigh, though thou art nigh,
And dost not hear my moan.

Loudly I'll sing, and proudly,
That thou, sweet heart, shalt hear me.
Thy sunny smile shall cheer me,
Nor leave me more alone.

WHEN WE SEE.

WHEN we see a youth and maid
Seek yet shun each other's eye,
Full of speech though naught is said,
Phyllis laughs, and so do I.

When they meet with hand and lip,
Little recking we are by,
Flying others' fellowship,
Phyllis laughs, and so do I.

I for Phyllis care no whit,
And she cares no whit for me :
Sure, there is a charm in it,
That at last we both agree !

When we meet and when we part,
We gaze no more with longing eye,
List no more with longing heart ;
Phyllis laughs, and so do I.

OVER THE SILENT CITY.

TRANSLATED.

OVER the silent city
Rings loud the bell's refrain.
Good-night ! thy heart shall slumber,
And day will come again.
Thy child sleeps in the cradle,
And I am by thy side,
Though care and trouble ever
May with us both abide.
Once more, then, let us whisper,
"Good-night, my love, good-night."
The moon shines o'er our dwelling ;
God keeps us in his sight.

THE TABOR.

TRANSLATED.

GAILY, loudly, sound my tabor,
 Though my heart is torn with fears.
Gaily, loudly, sound my tabor :
If thou, cheery friend, couldst gather
What my woe is, louder, farther
Every note would echo rather
 Of my sorrow and my tears.

'Mid the sound of mirth and dances
Mine the hand that joy enhances ;
Thought is lulled to happy fancies—
 Thought of sorrow and of tears.
Happy ye, each motion linking
Through the measure, never thinking
How to sobs my song is sinking,
 For my heart is torn with fears.

AS AT NIGHT.

TRANSLATED.

As at night in dreams I lay,
I saw a bright ladye
'Till the waking of the day ;
'Too soon it wakened me !
Vanished the sweet surprise
I know not where—the wind
Wafted it from my eyes.
My eyes are too unkind ;
I would that I were blind !

I HAVE THEE.

TRANSLATED.

I HAVE thee, and thou hast me,
That thou canst assurèd be.
Within my heart
Fast locked thou art,
And, as I have lost the key,
In my heart thou'lt ever be.

OF ALL THE THINGS.

TRANSLATED.

OF all the things that hardest are,
The hardest is the diamond stone ;
But I will say—more true by far—
That, were my lady rightly known,
Her heart is harder still ;
Whate'er I say and sing,
Howe'er I service bring,
She is the harder, stern of heart and will.
Shall I beseech her more, or strive until
My years are gone in sorrowing ?

COME FORTH.

TRANSLATED.

COME forth, come forth, my bonnie bride,
And roam the world with me ;
Through good betide, and ill betide,
I'll share my all with thee.
And thou shalt dwell my heart within
As long as I shall live,—
To love me less, the only sin
That I shall not forgive.

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